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ABSTRACT

This paper presents historical information about language teaching methods and focuses on "formal" and "functional" strategies of teaching and learning. Particular attention is directed toward the immersion type of education. A table that lists developments in language teaching theory from 1840-1977 is presented. A table that summarizes teaching/learning strategies, shown as dimensions, is also presented. Examples are cited to distinguish between formal and functional language learning strategies. Formal techniques, which are techniques of study and practice, do not coalesce into a full language in use. A problem with using language in isolation is that what is learned in the language class, may be difficult to apply in actual communication. Functional use of language is dictated by communication needs such as occur in residence abroad and in immersion programs. (SW)

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Second Language Teaching/Learning Strategies

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EDITOR'S NOTE: The following is an editorialized version of a key address by Dr. Stern, delivered at the Red Deer October 1977 MLC Annual Conference.

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

What I propose to do, first of all, is to provide a little bit of the background of this whole business of *strategies*. Then I am going to focus on one particular set of strategies, namely, those which I call 'formal' and 'functional' strategies of teaching and learning.

Among the functional aspects of language teaching, I would like to pay attention particularly to the so-called immersion type of education, because I believe that immersion has a very important role to play in the thinking and in the work of all language teachers.

At the moment, some think of French immersion primarily as a program. Many people in language teaching, to my mind, have not yet realized that French immersion is an approach to language teaching which has extremely important implications for language teaching in general, regardless of whether it is in a school or at the university or anywhere else.

The background I am going to refer to is "the development of language teaching theory from 1840 to 1977" (see Table I).

TABLE I
Development of Language Teaching Theory: 1840-1977

Dates	*Developments*	
From about:		
1840	Grammar-Translation Method	
1880	'Reform'/'Direct' Method	
1920-40	'Compromise'/'Oral' Method - Reading Method	
1940	Linguistic Approach. American Army Method Immersion I.	
1950's	Audiolingual (USA) and Audiovisual (France/Britain) Methods	
1964	Audiolingual Habit Theory v. Cognitive Code-Learning Theories	
1964-77	Critique and breakdown of method concept:	New methods:
	a) Method Analysis (Mackey-1965; Halliday, McIntosh + Strevens-1964)	a) Immersion II (Lambert + Silent way, Tucker-1972) (Stevick-1973)
	b) Curriculum Theory (Valette-1972; Stern-1973; Allen-1976)	b) Suggestopedia (Racle-1975)
	c) Language Syllabus Theory (Corder-1973; Wilkins-1973; van Ek-1975)	c) Other language learning systems.
	d) Strategy Concept (Bosco + di Pietro-1970; Stern-1974; Krashen + Seliger-1974)	
	e) Individualization/Personalization and Human Relations Concepts (Altman-1975; Curran-1975)	
	f) Language Learning Research	
	g) Language Teaching Research	

During this period of 130 years or so, the language teaching profession has gone through experiences of language teaching methods. There has been a continued search for the improvement of language teaching methods. In the 1840s, the grammar-translation method first was very widespread as a technique of language teaching and then was violently opposed in the 1880s when the reformed or 'direct' method was introduced. And this, in turn, lead to tremendous arguments.

FRENCH IMMERSION IS AN APPROACH WHICH HAS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT IMPLICATIONS.

Around the turn of the century, there were heated debates about the value of the 'direct' method, similar to debates and arguments about teaching methods lately. In the 1920s and 1930s, an accommodation of sorts between the different feuding camps and a compromise method, sometimes referred to as the 'oral' method, became widely accepted. What I am describing are developments that took place originally perhaps more in Europe than in North America, but they affected both Europe and North America equally in succession.

Around 1940, reactions against the strong dissatisfactions were felt, particularly in the United States against the then current language teaching methods in the schools. Linguists were called in to help with the teaching of languages in the army, and the so-called army method was developed. One characteristic of methods of pre-war years had been that language teachers accommodated themselves very much to the existing school situation. And they accepted it. They accepted the fact that you teach languages, let us say, half an hour a day, or 40 minutes a day, or 50 minutes a day. That was an accepted fact.

But it was during the army years that changes occurred. It was recognized that intensifying the approach would perhaps lead to a great improvement in language learning. A good deal of satisfaction was felt with the methods that were then becoming current in the army, and these intensive methods were often referred to as immersion (I).

This type of immersion (I) - that is to say, of an intensive language course - has continued until today. It has led to a good deal of confusion with the type of immersion (II) which is currently used in the school systems, with which some of you might be familiar.

In the post-war years, some of the experience of the war years and the immediate post-war period led to two different approaches, often referred to as the audiolingual method and (in France and Britain) the audiovisual method. Here in Alberta, for example, *Voix et Images de France* and *Bonjour Line* are in use, and they have been the typical characteristics of what was created in the 1950s and referred to as the audiovisual method.

THE ONLY REAL METHOD THAT HAS BEEN THOROUGHLY INVESTIGATED IS IMMERSION.

Trying to come to terms with these different methods, trying to see whether improvements were as satisfactory as one could hope for, led in the mid-'60s to a good deal of argument once again about a more habit-forming audiolingual approach. Both the audio-visual and the audiolingual methods were described as habit-forming methods - the audiolingual habit theory, as J.B. Carroll called it. He contrasted that with various forms, similar to what had been described as the grammar-translation method since the 1840s, and referred to it as a more cognitive approach. Therefore, the cognitive theory again became respectable, and people began to look at it.

It was about the same time that, looking back over this long history of methods and battles with methods, a good many people became rather disillusioned and disenchanted with the whole method idea - the whole method concept. I have tried to briefly outline this breakdown of the methods in Table I under the years 1964 to 1977.

The immersion type of approach was first developed around 1965 in Montreal, in the St. Lambert school system, instigated by a parents group in St. Lambert. It was tried out, first of all, in one school in St. Lambert and then spread from there into other schools in Montreal, from there to Ontario, and then right across the country. I think it is perhaps one of the most significant developments of the continued approach, trying to improve language teaching by a unified method approach.

There are some other approaches that have been advocated, tried, and flared up in recent years: the Silent Way and Suggestopedia.

A good many people turned away from the method concept. In the first instance, I think two books must be mentioned: one by Dr. Marquette from Laval, and the other from three British writers, Halliday, McIntosh and Strevens. The authors of these books advocated something they described as method analysis. They tried to break down all the arguments about the various methods in terms of more basic concepts.

Other people tried to find more basic concepts and tried to relate what was previously described as a method; they analyzed it more clearly in terms of curriculum theory. They tried to think more in terms of objectives and procedures that people use, rather than thinking of a package which could then be described as the method.

THE VIEW OF AN INDIVIDUAL TEACHER DOES NOT MAKE A METHOD A GOOD ONE.

Similarly, there were some who believed that principles other than those which had previously governed language teaching would be more important. For example, the Europeans developed the theory of a notional syllabus, rather than of an grammatical syllabus. They tried to analyze the so-called methods in terms of more basic principles that would underlie the methods themselves. This is how the *strategy concept* came in. Others tried different ideas. They believed that rather than focusing on the methods, one should focus much more on the students, trying to help the individual student.

Lastly, there is a group of people who feel that we can never get any peace in language teaching and never have any sort of common solution unless we look at language learning - how languages are actually learned and how languages are actually taught. And, in that case, this would require research on learning and teaching.

This is roughly the kind of situation which we are faced with at present. I would just like to add one more word about the point in history at which we are presently. The only real method that has been thoroughly investigated, that has been thoroughly researched, is immersion. All the others have had a certain amount of investigation, but most of them are simply based on speculation and on the opinion and experiences of teachers. Obviously, the experiences of teachers are vitally important, but the view of an individual teacher does not necessarily make a method a particularly good one.

THE 'METHOD' CONCEPT IS DEFECTIVE: IT IS TOO BROAD AND TOO FLUID.

What made people begin to talk about *strategies* of teaching and learning?

I would now like to turn to the 'strategy' concept itself. The 'strategy' concept has been brought into use not merely as a kind of synonym, a modern synonym, to method — where people used to talk about methods, they now talk about strategies. I do not think that is so. The 'method' concept is defective; it is too broad and too fluid. We must make certain distinctions which the method concept makes only implicitly. For example, I talked about the direct method or the audiolingual method; it implies not only teaching procedures, but also implies certain goals, certain purposes, certain objectives that we pursue, as well as the ways and means to reach these objectives.

Because there is this confusion of ways and means, I think it has been found useful to try to break down the method concept. Here we talk purely about certain broad categories which indicate certain orientations that we employ in teaching and learning. For these broad categories, we use the term *strategy*.

The teacher uses certain strategies, as well as the learner. The learner has his own strategies; they may differ from the teacher's strategies. If we use the term *strategy* as a broad term of broad orientations, we might use another term which would describe the particular acts of teaching and learning, which we can name *techniques*. So a number of techniques would then describe a strategy.

Principal Teaching/Learning Strategies

(see Table II)

This table simply tries to summarize some strategies that one can identify. Altogether, there are fourteen. They are ranged as dimensions, of the more or less of each. The first one, 'cross-lingual' and 'cross-cultural', as well as 'intra-lingual' and 'intra-cultural', is of course akin to the translation aspects of the grammar-translation method. The intra-lingual, intra-cultural strategy is akin to the so-called 'direct' method. What in fact we mean by that is that if a cross-lingual strategy is used, one does not give up his first language as a point of reference.

TABLE II

cross-lingual ⟷ intra-lingual

cross-cultural ⟷ intra-cultural

formal ⟷ functional

(linguistic) ⟷ (communicative)

explicit ⟷ implicit

(analytical/rational) ⟷ (intuitive)

	productive	receptive
audiolingual	speaking	listening
graphic	writing	reading

timing: concentrated ⟷ distributed

(massed)

grouping: individualized ⟷ whole class

(small group) (large group)

A NUMBER OF TECHNIQUES DESCRIBE A STRATEGY.

Most of us, in language learning, use our first language as a point of reference. Perhaps an interesting tableau of that is how we get used to the metric system. As we drive along, do we or do we not translate the kilometres along the road into miles? That is to say, do we use a cross-lingual code, do we go back to our first language, namely the language of mileage, when we talk about distance, or do we remain in the second language? For a time perhaps, it is quite useful to do this, but the moment comes when we have to be intra-lingual, when it becomes uneconomical always to refer back to our old point of reference.

So in language learning, what we are trying to do is to develop a new reference system. And this is what, in fact, the direct method tried to do, and that is what most teachers try to do by using intra-lingual techniques.

Let me say something now about the next dimension, which has the labels "explicit, analytical, rational or cognitive" or "implicit or intuitive." That set of strategies reflects the argument that went on in the 1960s: whether, in fact, language learning is better done on a kind of unconscious level by methods or drills without explanations or whether you should offer explanations - whether you should analyze the language to the learner.

Next set: Language teaching in the past was severely criticized for being too graphic, that is, too much concerned with reading and writing. As a reaction against this, we turned toward an emphasis on speaking and listening - the audiolingual emphasis. But here again, with both of these, we have the choice of emphasizing more the receptive end, that is, the listening and reading, or the speaking and writing, the more productive side of it. Those are choices that are open to us.

IMMERSION: A MORE CONCENTRATED APPROACH TO LANGUAGE LEARNING.

The next strategy is open to the individual teacher, a school system and very often a school, whether there is a preference for providing something akin to what, in the history of language teaching, I referred to as the Immersion (I) (namely, a more concentrated approach to language learning offered today in semestered schools), or whether there is a preference for a more regularly distributed small amount of language teaching, often referred to as the Dripfield Approach.

Lastly, language teaching can be organized in such a way that you teach whole groups together. Whether you like it or not, the language teacher is the leader of the orchestra and he directs the whole orchestra. Others have experimented and have tried to break down a whole class formal individualized instruction, for small group instruction, and also for various forms of ability grouping.

THE HISTORY OF LANGUAGE TEACHING IS NOT SUCH A BAD HISTORY AFTER ALL.

These are some of the options open to us. I think we must recognize that the history of language teaching, which at first

seemed to be rather a dismal history of continuous change and going around in circles, is not such a bad history after all, because it has highlighted certain aspects of language teaching which are open to us. Perhaps we do not know yet sufficiently well which of these emphases are best for language teaching and learning, but we certainly have a tremendous repertoire at our disposal.

Formal and Functional Strategies

I would like now to refer to the distinction between 'formal' and 'functional' (see Table III). This is perhaps the most comprehensive choice of strategies at our disposal. To understand the formal-functional dimension, I would like to refer to something that is characteristic of ourselves as users of languages, namely, the 'code communicative dilemma'. Let us consider a language as a code with certain rules and regularities. If this is assumed, it is psychologically impossible to pay full attention to that code and convey meaning or receive meaning and to communicate at the same time. You cannot do both. You can either communicate or pay attention to the code.

TABLE III

Formal	Functional
Controlled language input in a pedagogical sequence.	Uncontrolled exposure to the language in use as dictated by communicative needs.
Language as a system. Control of language through selection, gradation, presentation and repetition. Drills, exercises, practice. Emphasis on linguistic processes: study and practice of formal properties of sounds, grammar, lexis, discourse, semantic, features or sociolinguistic characteristics.	Language in use in its own habitat. Experience approach. L2 as medium of instruction. Using L2 for communication. Residence abroad. 'Immersion'.

This is quite obvious when a person is faced with a new language, let us say, very often in a situation such as having a car breakdown in a foreign country whose language he does not speak. He tries desperately to say something; he is in need of communication. There is a need to communicate, but the person who finds himself in this situation lacks the means to express himself. He is

now to focus on the code, but he is so excited about the breakdown of the car that he cannot cope with the code. It is extremely difficult to focus on code and communication at the same time.

THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN 'FORMAL' AND 'FUNCTIONAL' IS PERHAPS THE MOST COMPREHENSIVE CHOICE OF STRATEGIES.

In the normal language class, when we practise verb paradigms or sentence patterns, we apply a formal strategy.

Take another example: If you look for a room in a hotel in a foreign country, and talk to the receptionist however well you can in the second language, you use a functional approach. You are actually ordering a room, not pretending to order. You are not saying, "I am only doing this to practise French." You really want this room. You are, therefore, in a communicative situation. And that is a functional approach.

IT IS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO FOCUS ON CODE AND COMMUNICATION AT THE SAME TIME.

The distinction between these two is that, on the formal side, you see the controlled language input arranged in a pedagogical sequence. On the functional side, you see the uncontrolled exposure to the language in use as dictated by communicative needs.

The formal strategy is employed with any of our so-called liberal methods. If you use the audiovisual method or the audio-lingual method, the direct method, the cognitive method, the grammar-translation method, you focus on the language - they all employ formal strategies. If you want to learn a language, you must use a formal strategy.

The formal strategy covers a wide range of techniques designed to help the student to learn the second language. It is the stock and trade of the language teacher, and most of us are very familiar with it.

IN USING FORMAL STRATEGIES, WE MAKE NO PRETENSE THAT IT IS REAL COMMUNICATION.

In using formal strategies, we make no pretense that it is real communication. If, for example, you ask your students questions and they give you answers, then this is not a true question-answer session. You do not ask questions because you want to know something, for you know it already. You merely want to know if the student understands you, and you want to give him an opportunity to speak. It is a stimulus that you provide to encourage him to make a response so that he practises the language. You are not finding out. If, for example, you read a text with your student and ask questions about the text and the student gives you answers, you would be surprised if your student said to the question, "Who has killed X in the story?" "Well! can't you read it yourself? It is there on the page." If he gave you an answer like that, it would be a communicative answer. Of course, it would be regarded as inappropriate and rude, because he does not play the practice game with which you are providing him.

The principal formal techniques are, in fact, techniques of study and practice. In order to learn a language, you must study and practise. You use the grammar book, the textbook, the note book, the dictionary, and whatever.

Problems of the Formal Strategy

A few words about the problems of the formal strategy. We are familiar with these problems. I will just bring them out into the open and briefly describe them.

THE TROUBLE WITH FORMAL TECHNIQUES IS THAT THEY DO NOT COALESCE INTO A FULL LANGUAGE IN USE.

The first problem is what I might describe as the "Humpty-Dumpty effect" - that is, you can break up the language, but it is more difficult to put it together again. You refer to isolated items of the language, for example, a relative clause or different

past tenses, and you can study the different past tenses and work out whether you should use the "imparfait" or the "passé composé" in certain circumstances. That is a formal technique. And perhaps the trouble with formal techniques is that they do not coalesce into a full second language, a full language in use, full language competence.

THERE IS NO NECESSARY TRANSFER FROM LEARNING IN A FORMAL SETTING TO ACTUAL USE.

When a language is used in isolation, there is a marked lack of transfer, which means that you learn it in a language class, but that when it is actually used - when you move from code learning to actual communication - you find it difficult to apply. There is no necessary transfer from learning in a formal setting to actual use. A good example of this nowadays is one that Valentine, the psychologist, offered and always struck me as a good example of second language or second dialect learning. In Ireland, the teacher wants to train his students to say 'put' instead of 'putten'. When one student says in some context 'putten' rather than 'put', the teacher asks the other children, "what's wrong with that sentence?" A student answers, "He should have putten 'put' where he has putten 'putten'." In the actual communicative setting, he uses the word 'putten', although he knows what is correct - that it should have been 'put'.

Editor's Summary of Conclusion

Dr. Stern ended his paper by saying that he did not wish to discredit the formal methods, although the objectives of the formal methods are not in communicating as such, but rather in how something is said. It is in reaction to this formal setting or strategies that John McNamara has come to favor the functional setting.

IMMERSION PROGRAMS CONSTITUTE AN EXTENDED OPPORTUNITY TO USE THE SECOND LANGUAGE FUNCTIONALLY.

The functional strategy can be defined as learning in context, much the same way as a child at home. Student exchanges, stays in

the native language country, offer such opportunities, although they may fail to produce functionalism.

Immersion programs constitute an extended opportunity to use the second language functionally if the focus is directed toward the subjects taught and not on the language itself. In immersion programs, preference must be given to the functional settings, even if they do not necessarily preclude formal strategies. Their greatest advantage is the result of learning to communicate right from the start. They allow the learner to become involved in the functional use of the second language. Contrary to Rebecca Valette's and Wilga Rivers' viewpoints on second language learning, immersion programs not only derive value from increased time and added concentration in the second language, but they also lend themselves to form, meaning and use to be applied simultaneously.

There also exist half-way houses between formal and functional strategies. Language clubs, centres and lunch meetings, for example, provide a mixture of both the formal and the functional settings.

To Dr. Stern, it seemed very apparent that the functional strategies were to be favored, for the communicative approach increases the relevancy of learning a second language.